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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present a systems approach to career selection. Although primarily intended for counseling adults, it should also be applicable to high school and college level individuals. The systems model identifies three groups of individuals who need career counseling: (1) program-selected individuals; (2) cluster-area-selected individuals; and (3) undecided individuals. The model attempts to present a step by step process for selecting a career. The flow-chart approach is used for several reasons. It organizes the numerous necessary steps involved in selecting a career, indicates that the procedure is replicable, and gives the counselor a graphic view of the total process. (Author)

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CAREER SELECTION: A SYSTEMS APPROACH

Robert L. Bradley

In recent years much evidence has been compiled indicating a need for Career Education. Sydney P. Marland (1971), past U.S. Commissioner of Education, has stated:

> Of those young people currently in high school only three out of ten will go on to academic college level work. One-third of those will drop out before receiving the baccalaureate degree. This means that eight out of ten high school students should be receiving occupational training of some type, but only about two of those eight students, in fact, are receiving such training. Consequently, half of our high school students, a total of 1,500,000 a year, are being offered what amounts to irrelevant, general education pap

Phillip M. Pollivchak, Director of Manpower Development, National Association of Home Builders further states that:

> In high school and college ninety percent of the educational dollar goes into the academic curricula, toward training people who fill only fifteen percent of the jobs. If the other eighty-five percent don't go to college, or if they go and drop out, they are convinced they are failures, so they start out life with a sense of failure.

If the above two statements are true, then the need for Career Education is, in fact, a reality and the development of Career Education programs should be a priority goal for the schools.

However, due to the many conflicting beliefs as to what Career Education is and when and where it should take place, the term itself has become ambiguous. Because of this ambiguity, a variety of approaches to the problem of Career Education have been devised. Hardwick (1971) used a systems approach by developing a model for implementation of Career Education. The four major steps in the model are occupational awareness, occupational orientation, occupational exploration and specialization. The program starts in the first grade and terminates at the

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end of the twelfth grade with, hopefully, one-hundred percent successful placement. The state of Georgia, explains Swain (1971), is attacking the problem by training teachers for career exploration programs in grades K-14.

The complications involved in selecting a career have been recognized. Many feel as Hardwick and Swain that for a student to develop an interest and competency in a field he should start at a young age observing as many careers as possible.

The need to begin career education at an early age may be valid, but older students do not have the luxury of once again becoming children and following an organized and thorough program. Deciding on a vocation is a frightening prospect for an older student. The individual, in most cases, is more serious than younger students about his future and selecting a career that fulfills his needs. What may be of assistance in aiding these undecided students is a systematic organized career selection process; a process which may be assimilated and utilized by the individual.

The process each student follows in seeking a career should be constructed so that it is replicable. This is necessary due to the fact that the present career decision may not always satisfy existing needs. Many disciples of the Career Education movement have used a systems approach to develop programs for the schools. Koch (1972) as well as others (Campbell, Suzuki and Gabria, 1972) have used systems in developing Career Education programs. Drake and Morgan (1971) utilized a career decision making systems model in helping disadvantaged adult learners make realistic career decisions. The purpose of the system developed in this paper is to avail Community College students with a replicable method of career selection.

METHOD

Systems Design

The systems model (Appendix A) is designed so that a student falls into one of three categories and is guided numerically from that point. Each student must state in the initial interview (1.0) with the counselor whether he has: selected a program (1.1), selected a cluster area (such as Health fields, Engineering, Business) (1.2) or is undecided (1.3).

From 1.1 the student proceeds to Orientation to the Field or Program (2.0). Here the student follows certain steps in sequence: First the individual must explain his concept of the program (2.1). He must, in written form, describe the program he wishes to enter and give certain details as to why he wishes to pursue this career. Next the student is directed to the Career Center (2.2). With the decided student this is merely the first part of a three step verification process (2.2, 2.3, 2.4). One will note that the two steps following the visit to the Career Center are a visit to the program and discussion with the chairman (2.3) and an off-campus visit with employer/employee (2.4). Each of these steps is necessary to insure career selection satisfaction. If at any point during (2.2), (2.3), or (2.4) the student decides against entering his previously selected program he may feed back to (1.0) and begin the career decision process again.

If he completes (2.4) and is still interested, the next step is to see the counselor for the final interview (2.5). Here the counselor and student review the selected program. They should discuss the program and the counselor should evaluate as to whether or not the student has a realistic conception of the program. Vital concerns of the counselor at this point include questioning how the student sees himself (self concept) functioning in each of his various

career alternatives (concept of vocation), examining any client stated disadvantages as to the effect on job happiness and clarifying any misinformation he may have received (e.g. - many students relate glamorous salaries, opportunities for advancement, etc. that may not exist).

If after the final interview the student still desires to pursue the previously selected career then he enters the program (3.0). If the student decides he is no longer interested in entering the previously selected program he should feed back to 1.0 and reenter the career decision model via the proper component (1.1, 1.2, 1.3). It should be noted here that if the student is still fairly sure of his choice but needs more information, he should still feed back to 1.0 select 1.1 as his option, and begin the process again. With his knowledge of the system, he should be able to pursue a more intensive study of the program.

The second category under this system is composed of students who have selected a cluster area (1.2). The process this group follows does not vary significantly from that of the program selected (1.1) individuals. The only necessary modifications include a feed forward to 2.2 (student directed to Career Center materials) and then a feed back to 2.1 (student examines concept of program). From this point the procedures are identical as those for the program selected (1.1) group. The deviation is necessary because the (1.2) individual not having a specific program selected should do research relative to the selected cluster area previous to the examination of concept (2.1). Once the student is back to 2.1 and has examined his concept of the program(s) it should be most beneficial to follow all the subsequent steps in order: return to the Career Center (2.2), visit the program and talk to the chairman (2.3), make an off-campus visit (2.4), return to the counselor's office for a final evaluation of self and program (2.5) and either decide against pursuing

a selected vocation (NO) or enter the applicable career program (YES). Thus the student either begins the process once again (NO to 1.0) or enters the program (YES to 3.0).

The final category of student that the system identifies is that individual who is undecided (1.3). The first step for the undecided student is to, with the counselor's help, evaluate himself (1.31). This should be done by examining interests and occupational orientation, abilities, values, and personality. This should be done both through available psychometric instruments and self-reports. Next the student and counselor should review the self-evaluation data and relate the results to the students vocational future (1.32). It is imperative that some initial but completely reversible decisions be made at this point. With this done the student can review tentative program choices (1.33) feed back to (1.2) and enter the body of the system.

The final component in the total system is a Post-Entrance Evaluation (4.0). This should consist of a questionnaire relevant to the programs of the institution. It should be administered one-semester after the student enters the program and should instruct the dissatisfied student (4.2) to see the counselor. This will constitute a feed back in the system to the initial interview (1.0) and the student may begin the process once again. All satisfied students will simply feed back to 3.0 and remain in the program.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation of Model

An evaluation of the systems model itself should be conducted periodically. A simple frequency count would be a reliable indicator of need to examine the components of the system.

If no students are reaching levels of satisfaction, it can be concluded that the system is at fault. If a very high percentage of the total who enter the system are unable to make any career decisions or are dissatisfied after program entrance, then an examination of the system is in order. Both the individual components and the flow of the total system should be examined. If in an evaluation of the system a problem is discovered that cannot be corrected by refabricating the model, then there is a possibility that conditions exist in the institution's specific situation which cause the model to be ineffective. In this case the model should be discarded.

IMPLEMENTATION

The above model could be utilized at any educational institution. Minor modifications may be necessary for compatibility in certain situations but the concept should be universally applicable. However, as previously stated specific conditions at a particular institution could destroy the usefulness of the model.

The model is a counselor's guide to the proper sequence to be followed by the student. It should not be expected that a student could glide through the Career Center "flow chart in hand". In most cases, without time-consuming explanation, the student would make only one life decision; he would decide he is confused enough without seeking help from the counselor.

A remedy to this issue is for the counselor to develop a booklet (Appendix B) for each category of student. Thus the student with his program selected (1.1) would have a booklet listing the steps he follows, as would the person who has selected a cluster (1.2) and the undecided individual (1.3). This would not only elucidate matters but would give the total program more substance. It would introduce a "hands on" attack to a problem the student has probably

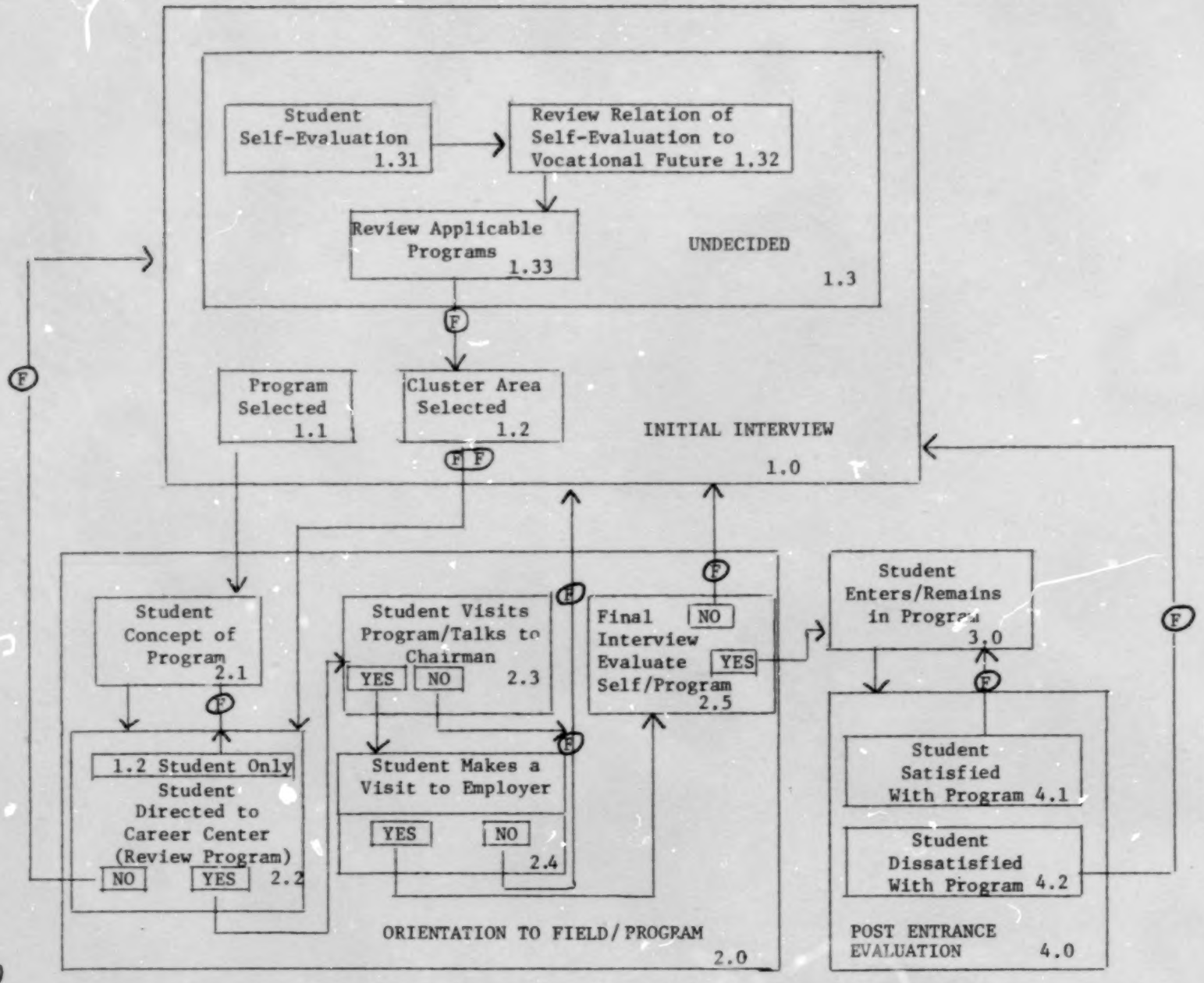
always considered very confusing and intangible. The booklet would not only give him a place to keep notes concerning his individual tentative career decisions and choices but would also avail him of space to register and save career thoughts. It should also be remembered that the individual retains the student booklet and can elist its help if ever confused regarding the career selection process.

Before ever starting the career search, the student should be made cognizant of the fact that career development is a life-long process. He must be aware that he may not find vocational satisfaction during this career search or for several years. After the student has ingested these two facts, the counselor needs to emphasize that the process the individual is about to begin is time consuming and requires a commitment on his part. Here the counselor needs to assess the individual's desire to continue. All the above should be reiterated in the student booklet and the booklet should contain an escape clause (e.g. - "searching for a career is time consuming and many of us are not ready to begin -- if you don't feel you have the time now, see the counselor and return the booklet. Remember, we are here to help you. So when you are ready, just stop by and we'll get started"). This will further emphasize the need for involvement on the part of the student and not cause him to feel compelled to start even though he does not want to.

DISCUSSION

The primary goal of this paper has been to develop a lucid career selection process. Hopefully, the counselor can apply the concepts to a specific institutional situation, restate the procedures at the educational level of the group he is aiding and develop a format which the student can assimilate and repeat in the future.

The systems approach is used for very specific reasons. It is an organizer, consolidating and collating the numerous necessary steps involved in selecting a career. Its main function here is two-fold. First it is an aid to the counselor in his attempt to teach the student a process; a process which will enable the student to thoroughly examine himself and the world of careers. Secondly, the system insures that the career selection process is replicable in a variety of situations. It provides the basic framework on which the counselor can build.


Student Self-Evaluation 1.31
Review Relation of Self-Evaluation to Vocational Future 1.32
Review Applicable Programs 1.33
UNDECIDED 1.3
F
Program Selected 1.1
Cluster Area Selected 1.2
INITIAL INTERVIEW 1.0
Student Concept of Program 2.1
Student Visits Program/Talks to Chairman
YES NO 2.3
Final Interview Evaluate Self/Program 2.5
NO
YES
Student Enters/Remains in Program 3.0
1.2 Student Only
Student Directed to Career Center (Review Program)
NO YES 2.2
Student Makes a Visit to Employer
YES NO 2.4
ORIENTATION TO FIELD/PROGRAM 2.0
Student Satisfied With Program 4.1
Student Dissatisfied With Program 4.2
POST ENTRANCE EVALUATION 4.0

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present a systems approach to career selection. Although primarily intended for counseling adults, it should also be applicable to high school and college level individuals.

The systems model identifies three groups of individuals who need career counseling: program selected individuals, cluster area selected individuals, and undecided individuals. The model attempts to present a step by step process for selecting a career.

The flow-chart approach is used for several reasons. It organizes the numerous necessary steps involved in selecting a career, provides that the procedure is replicable and gives the counselor a graphic view of the total process.

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The Case of the Speckled Band

or : So You're Undecided

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Written by: Robert L. Bradley and Pam Remer
Illustrations by: Pat Stathas
Tyleen Stathas

Have you ever watched a Sherlock Holmes movie or read one of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Well, if not, you're missing something. He is the greatest detective of all times.

In fact this booklet is named after one of his cases - "The Speckled Band". Holmes puts together some pretty tough clues in that one; But in the end, he finds the murderer (if you'd like to read "The Speckled Band", you can check a copy out at the counseling office). I think you'll enjoy it -- stop by.

NOTE!!

This is a career search and does take some time and effort on your part. If you are not ready to start just return the booklet to the counseling center. The reason I say be ready to work is that I know it's the only way you will have a good experience. Remember, you are welcome back anytime. This is YOUR CAREER CENTER!!!

OK, LET'S MOVE ON ------

Why talk about Sherlock Holmes when all you want me to do is tell you what career to pursue. Well, Holmes doesn't expect just to cruise up and put the finger on the guilty party. Just as Holmes must put the pieces together before he solves the mystery, so must you.

You must put many clues together before you can make a career decision - and probably that decision won't be final. Our values, interests and other factors can change and with them the vocation we may want to enter. That's why as you venture through this booklet you should be thinking of the process you are going through. You may not find the exact career for you right now, but as long as you know how to search for a career - - - you're like Sherlock Holmes - - - He always knows how to search for clues and put them together. Sometimes it just takes longer to solve some cases.

IMPORTANT

As you follow the steps in this booklet always:

1. Write down questions to ask the counselor.
2. Write down thoughts and ideas that come to mind throughout the booklet.
3. Make notes of any decisions you make about your likes, dislikes, values, abilities, and career interests.

All the above is to help you clarify the similarity between you and your areas of vocational interest. This will help us decide if you will be happy with a selected career.

WELL, IF YOU ARE READY HOLMES, SO AM I.

STEP 1

GO BACK TO THE COUNSELOR.

TELL HIM YOU ARE LOOKING FOR CLUES.

STEP 2

WHAT KIND OF CLUES ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

NOTES

KINDS OF CLUES I'M LOOKING FOR .....

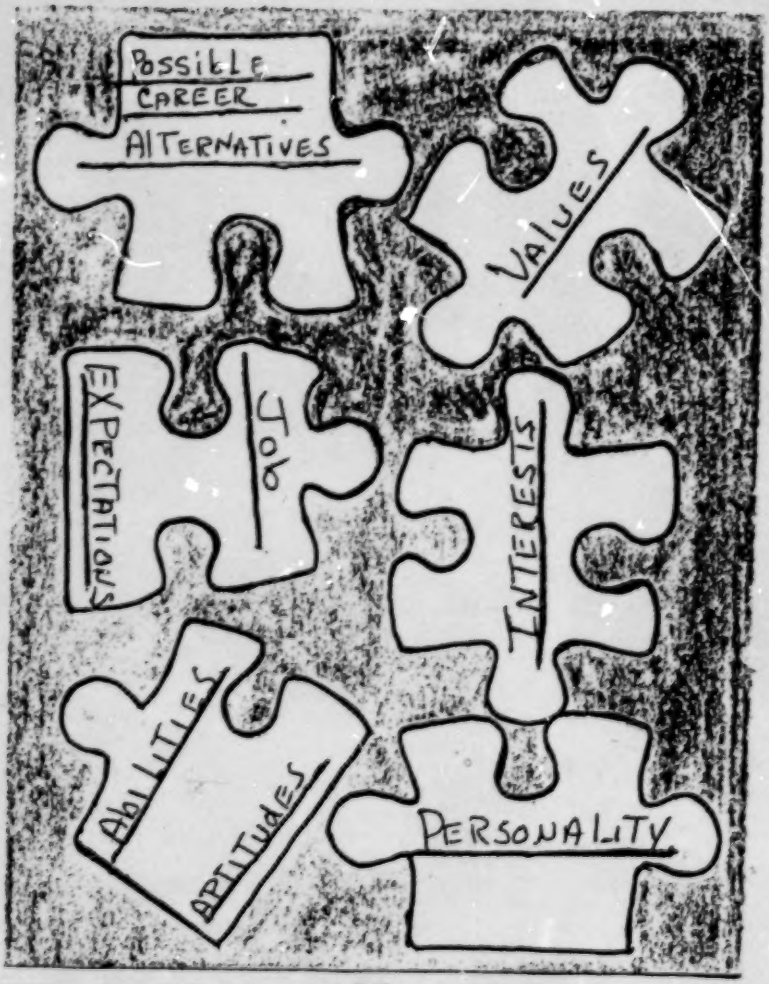
(Abilities and aptitudes, values, my personality my interests and job expectations)

STEP 3

LET'S PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER.

WHAT COULD BE SOME ANSWERS?

(Careers and Academic Majors)



Corresponds to 1.33 of the Model

STEP 4

NOW IT'S TIME TO SERIOUSLY LOOK AT SOME OF THE POSSIBLE CAREER SOLUTIONS.

GO TO HEADQUARTERS -- THE CAREER CENTER

KINDS OF CLUES

1. Type of abilities or aptitudes required
2. Type and difficulty of course work
3. Type of education required
4. Working conditions
5. Rewards and satisfactions of career
6. Negative aspects of career
7. Projected supply and demand in labor market for that career
8. Responsibilities of the career

STEP 5

COMPARE THE CLUES YOU HAVE ABOUT YOURSELF WITH WHAT YOU NOW KNOW ABOUT THE CAREERS YOU HAVE SELECTED THROUGH YOUR INVESTIGATION.

HOW DO THEY FIT TOGETHER?

1. Which career alternatives are compatible with self?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages to me of each?
3. What are the chances of successfully entering that field?
4. What can I do to improve those chances?

** Sherlock finds a clue in "The Speckled Band"

STEP 6

ANY RESOLVED QUESTIONS?

GO BACK TO HEADQUARTERS -- THE CAREER CENTER

DO ANYMORE TESTS NEEDED TO INVESTIGATE YOUR SELECTED CAREER ALTERNATIVES?

STEP 7

GO TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.

Visit a program or programs in the career(s) you have selected and talk to the chairman.

Corresponds to 2.4 of the model

STEP 8

TALK TO WITNESSES (People who work in the field or fields you are considering)

STEP 9

BACK TO THE COUNSELOR WITH ALL YOUR EVIDENCE.

IT IS TIME TO SIT DOWN AND EXAMINE.

1. How do I feel (not think) about each of my career alternatives?

2. a. Which are least desirable?

   b. Which are most desirable?

STEP 9 (Continued)

AM I READY TO DECIDE AMONG THE SUSPECTS

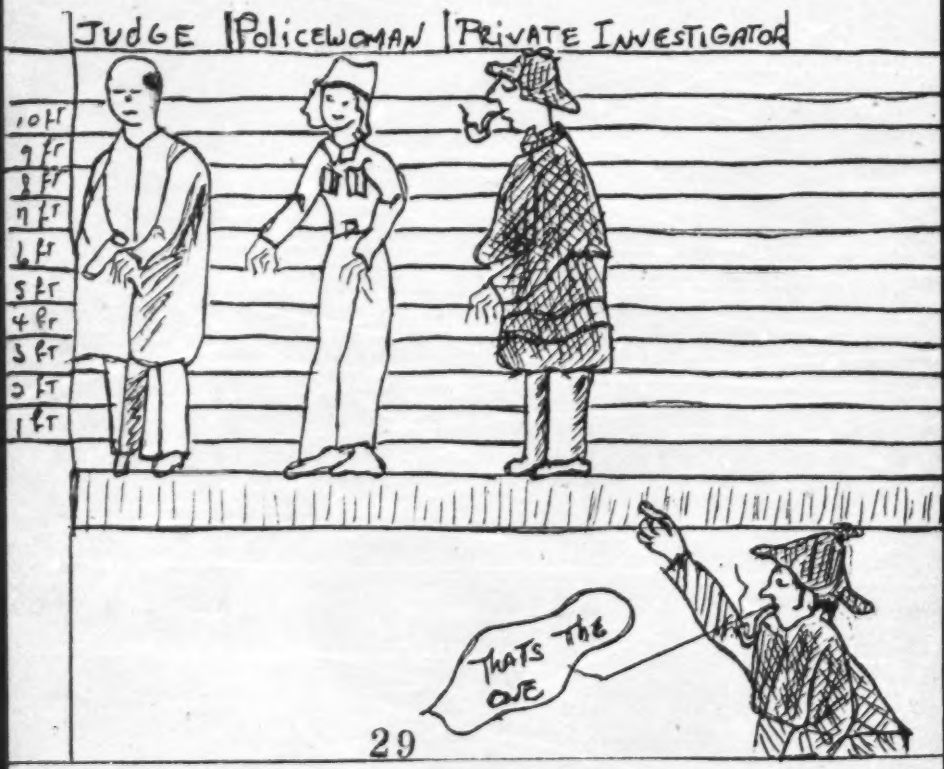
(CAREER ALTERNATIVES)

IF NO

GO BACK TO STEP 1

IF YES

GO TO THE NEXT PAGE



STAY WITH THE COUNSELOR.

RANK ORDER THE SUSPECTS

(First career choice, second career choice, etc.)

GET READY TO CLOSE THE CASE.

STEP 10

TAKE THE STEPS NECESSARY TO ENTER THE PROGRAM. THIS WILL CLOSE THE CASE FOR NOW BUT REMEMBER EVEN SHERLOCK'S CASES ARE REOPENED WITH GOOD EVIDENCE. SO AS YOU ENTER YOUR CHOSEN FIELD ALWAYS ASK YOURSELF:

IS THIS THE RIGHT DECISION FOR ME?

REMEMBER, IF THE ANSWER IS EVER NO . . . .

NO PROBLEM

JUST TAKE YOUR BOOKLET AND GO BACK TO STEP 1

STEP 11

A. Given my decision, what do I want to accomplish in the next 5, 10, 20 years (Suggestion: write a newspaper article about yourself that would appear about you in your hometown newspaper in 5 years or 10).

B. What can I do now to help realize these goals?

I found the culprit before you did too!
PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR School
Road To Success